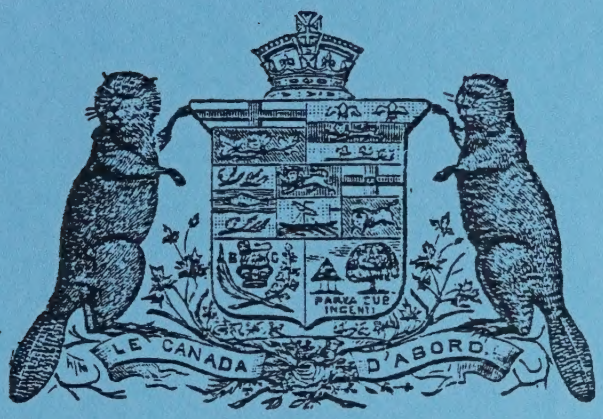
THE FUR TRADE IN CANADA



SUGGESTION FOR A COMPLETE COAT OF ARMS
FOR THE DOMINION OF CANADA.

An exhibition on the occasion of the meeting in Toronto of the Economic History Association

—~—

September 12 - October 27, 1978

THOMAS FISHER RARE BOOK LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

THE FUR TRADE IN CANADA

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
University of Toronto

"In truth, my brother, the Beaver does everything to perfection. He makes for us kettles, axes, swords, knives, and gives us drink and food without the trouble of cultivating the ground." 1

Although there is a tendency to think of the fur trade as having its beginning with the coming of the white man to North America, the truth is quite different. Anthropologists from Lafitau on have pointed out that the Indians had always traded among themselves. Each tribe had specific items which the others lacked, and trade consisted of moving these commodities from one group to another. In the North American climate, furs and fur robes were of extreme importance, and ranked with meat, fish, grain, mats, and cooking equipment as items of trade. The long cloak, an essential article of clothing, was made of beaver skins cut into rectangles and sewn together with moose tendons. The Basque fishermen, proverbially the first people from Europe to have used the cloaks, slept under them on cold nights and carried them back to France. There the French felt-makers realized their potentialities for the making of the broad hats then coming into vogue.

THE FRENCH FUR TRADE

It was no accident that Cartier, on July 6, 1534, observed a number of Indians on the shore of The Bay of Chaleur who "set up a great clamour and made frequent signs for us to come on shore, holding up to us some furs on sticks." The next day Cartier's men began trading knives and other iron goods for the furs, the Indians showing "marvellously great pleasure in possessing and obtaining these iron wares and other commodities, dancing and going through many ceremonies ..." 2 Two significant facts are apparent from this first recorded instance of Europeans trading with Indians. One is that the Indians had traded with white men before. The other is that trading was accompanied by "many ceremonies".

Ceremony was of extreme importance to the North American Indians, especially where trade was concerned, as Lafitau and Father Lejeune both point out. Before any trade could take place a ceremonial pattern was carefully followed: gifts were exchanged; then an alliance or "a peace" was arranged accompanied by the smoking of the peace pipe, speech-making and a banquet; then, last of all, the serious trading began. In other words, politics took precedence over economics, as was essential in a continent torn by tribal

---

[1] Chrestien Le Clercq, New relations of Gaspesia with the customs and religion of the Gaspesian Indians, tr. and ed. by Wm. F. Ganong. (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1910), 277.

[2] Jacques Cartier, The Voyages of Jacques Cartier, tr. and ed. by H. P. Biggar. (Ottawa, Public Archives of Canada, 1924), 49, 53.

warfare. When the Europeans arrived, trading relations were governed by the same principle. So far as the history of North America is concerned, when Champlain fired upon the Iroquois, the stage was set for all future relationships. The French allies thereafter were the Hurons and the Algonquins. The Dutch, and the English, when they entered the scene, would have the friendship of the Iroquois.

When the Europeans began to frequent the shores of North America, the fur trade was incidental to the fishing industry. However the French, pushed out of the Newfoundland fisheries into the Gaspé and finally into the St. Lawrence Valley, quickly saw the possibilities of the fur trade. Champlain, our first famous geographer, was shrewdly combining business with exploration on all his trips. He had seen the rivalry in the fur trade already established in the St. Lawrence region. North of the river were the Algonquins and other hunting tribes. These people soon became the middlemen between the French and the woodland Indians to the north and west where the great beaver country lay. The Iroquois, south of the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario, lived by agriculture, but needed furs. Stronger because of political organization and fiercer by nature, they were already warring with the Indians to the north when Champlain arrived at the present site of Lake Champlain in 1609. Here he took the step which settled alliances and fur trade arrangements alike. Accompanied by his Algonquin friends, he fired upon the Iroquois who had never seen firearms before. This they were never to forget. Unfortunately for the French, the Dutch arrived on the Hudson River the same year. They too wanted furs and were not slow to supply the Iroquois with the guns required to drive out the middlemen, the Indian friends of the French. The English succeeded the Dutch as the allies of the Iroquois.

Meanwhile furs were shipped to France most profitably. The domestic market was very strong, and so was the re-export trade to the Baltic and Russia. Prime winter beaver were known as "castor de muscovie". The English discovered the riches of the St. Lawrence accidentally, during a bout of hostilities with the French at Tadoussac and Quebec in 1628-29, and upon these occasions sent the stores of fur to London. The early historians, Lahontan and Sagard, make it clear, however, that the French grip on the beaver trade was secure for many years. The French pushed steadily into the west, developing a fine trade around the Great Lakes region, accompanied by missionaries who set up the religious communities in Huronia. At first the Recollets, and after the 1620's, the Jesuits, laboured among the Hurons, constantly beset by the Iroquois whose trade patterns had been upset by the French settlements. First hand accounts of these years come from the Jesuit Relations, meticulously written annual reports sent home to France by the Jesuit missionaries. By 1644 the Hurons were afraid to come from Huronia to Quebec with their furs, so clever and cruel were the Iroquois. After a brief truce, the Iroquois suddenly fell upon Huronia and wiped it out completely in 1648-9. The Iroquois menace now hung over the small colony on the St. Lawrence, and growth of the colony came to a halt. The Company of One Hundred Associates which had controlled both the colonizing and the fur trade seemed to have failed.

A new lease of life came with a change of policy under Louis XIV and his brilliant minister Colbert. Determined to make the colonies a source of strength to the mother country, Colbert set up a "Sovereign Council" over

New France. In 1666, a French regiment, recently arrived from France, made a concerted attack upon the Iroquois country, destroying their villages and killing many. The Iroquois sued for peace. It looked as though a new and prosperous regime was settling in. The French fur trade went on apace, despite the attacks made upon it by the French Bishop Laval who deplored the use of brandy in bribing the Indians. "Only dragon's gall," wrote a Jesuit priest, "would make ink black enough to describe the evils of the brandy traffic." As we shall see, the Governor too opposed the wanderings of the coureurs de bois among the Indians, and as a result a strange new chapter began to unfold.

THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

The only first-hand account of the preliminaries which led to the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company is written by one of its prime movers, Pierre Esprit Radisson. This dashing and erratic young Frenchman writes impartially of his own and of his brother-in-law's adventures as though they were all his own. A faulty translation of his account turned up among the papers of Samuel Pepys, and for some time Radisson's personality dominated the story, overshadowing the part played by the shrewder, steadier Groseilliers, his brother-in-law.

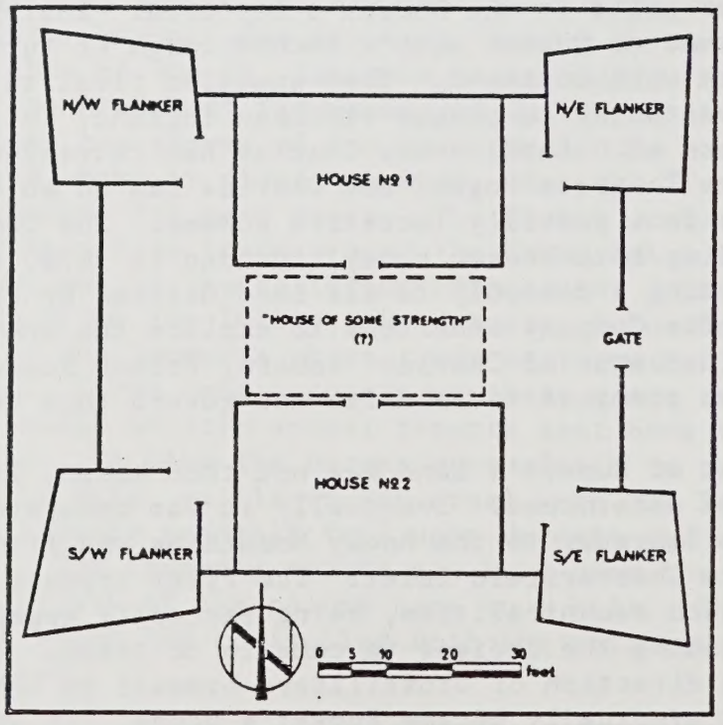
Both, though natives of France, had had exciting careers in North America as fur traders, indeed were the most daring and knowledgeable traders of their time. When they left on their eventful trip of 1661-2, they had defied the Governor of New France by slipping off alone against his express orders. Whether or not they reached Hudson's Bay on this trip will never be known; but they certainly met the Cree Indians and learned of the bountiful supply of beaver pelts in the Hudson's Bay area. Instead of being welcomed when they returned to Quebec with a record cargo of furs, they were arrested and fined. Both were outraged. They appealed first to France, then to New England, and eventually to plague-stricken England, in 1665. Here they were given an audience at Oxford, where Charles had retreated with his court. Beaver hats were in great vogue, and Charles had no objections to his friends investing money in a possibly lucrative scheme. The Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, founded in 1670, was the result, with Charles II granting a monopoly to all land drained by rivers flowing into Hudson's Bay. The Company undertook to explore the unknown territory, called Rupert's Land in honour of Charles' cousin, Prince Rupert, its first governor; the Company also promised to colonize and govern this vast region.

The extent of Rupert's Land was not then known, indeed the boundaries were never to be determined! Eventually it was understood to mean the land stretching from Labrador to the Rocky Mountains and from the headwaters of the Red River to Chesterfield Inlet. The first traders were not even remotely interested in such technicalities, being earnestly engaged in establishing forts and persuading the Indians to come in to trade. The first trading post, built under the direction of Groseilliers himself in 1668 was named in honour of the King but eventually became Rupert's House. It was on the south-east coast of James Bay. With the establishment of Fort Albany, founded by Charles Bayly in 1678, we come to the first permanent post on the west coast of James Bay. A short sketch of its early days is appended as it will serve as a

prototype for the forts on that side of Hudson's Bay - the others being Moose Factory, 1673; Fort Nelson, later York Factory, 1684; Fort Severn, 1685 and Fort Churchill (sometimes called Fort Prince of Wales), 1717.

According to Oldmixon's History of Hudson's Bay, in 1674, Charles Bayly sailed from Rupert River to Moose River in the late spring of 1674 to trade with the Indians. He then "undertook a Voyage to discover Schechittawam" and arrived there "where no Englishman had been before." (Schechittawam was later named Albany, after the second Governor of the Company, James, Duke of York.) He promised the Indians to return the next year to trade with them. It is not completely certain when he returned, but "a house of some strength" had been built before Bayly went back to England in 1679. Bayly left John Bridgar in charge, and assured the Governor and Committee that "the quantity of Beaver from thence" would be "very extraordinary".

Nearly 300 years later, Professor Walter Kenyon of the Royal Ontario Museum began a detailed study of the fort, eventually locating the original "house", on the south shore of the Albany River. It was a small rude structure surrounded by a picket fence. The new Governor, John Nixon, reported in 1682 that he had "a forte at Chechechewan to looke after which was not in Mr. Baylys tyme", so we conclude that the bastions were now in place. Nixon, having need of further facilities because of the size of his entourage, had the final phase of the building completed. The old house in the middle was abandoned and buried before the new structure with all its moats, bastions and other military devices was completed.



Plan of Fort Albany. ROM.

In 1686, the French on the St. Lawrence, severely incommoded by the rivalry on Hudson's Bay - rivalry the more deadly for having been instigated by two French citizens widely experienced in the Canadian fur trade - sent an expedition overland which captured the forts on James Bay. De Troyes, the leader of the attack, has left an account, complete with a quaint map by Pierre Allemand which locates Fort Albany (St. Anne's) on the south side of the Albany River. Albany was in French hands until its recapture by the English in 1693. The English held it through the wars that lasted until the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. After this it was decided to abandon the old fort and build on Albany Island. The move was completed in 1723.

As has been seen, the French felt the encroachment of the English very keenly. The returning of the Hudson's Bay forts to the English in 1713 only exacerbated the French traders' feelings. Cut off in the north, they decided to push west, and in 1732-41 La Vérendrye and his sons extended the fur trade into the Saskatchewan area, building forts as they went. Henday, a Hudson's Bay man, brought back frightening reports both of the strength of the French and of their influence over the Indians (his own Indians, bribed at one post with brandy, gave up all the good furs which he had hoped to take to the Bay in 1754). In fact the French threat to trade was at its height, with the possibility of a line of forts cutting off the shore-based English from the central plains of North America. Then suddenly, without warning, the Company's charter was attacked at home in England.

ARTHUR DOBBS AND THE NORTH WEST PASSAGE

Once the Treaty of Utrecht had temporarily ended all imminent danger from the French, the posts on the Bay seemed to settle down quietly to a humdrum existence. Trade was firmly established at Albany, Moose (re-established after being abandoned during the war), York and Churchill. Perhaps it was this very quietness - for as a monopolistic company it did maintain secrecy - that led to the great outburst against it in the 1740's. Arthur Dobbs, an Irish M.P. of apparently boundless energy and ambition for British trade, began to question the Company's affairs. Surely the Company was purposely blocking the search for the North West Passage to protect its monopoly, he argued. In 1741 at his instigation, the Admiralty sent out Christopher Middleton, a former Hudson's Bay employee. When Middleton's expedition failed - "There was no passage and there never would be" - Dobbs attacked him fiercely as having been corrupted by his former employers. Middleton defended himself in print in 1742, and Dobbs produced a spate of pamphlets and books including An Account of the countries adjoining to Hudson's Bay, the latter very important as the first book devoted to the Company and its adjoining territories. By cleverly twisting a few facts, he was able to rouse Parliament to offer a reward of £20,000 for the discovery of the Passage. When Middleton's second-in-command, William Moor, set off on another expedition, Dobbs was one of the principal backers. When this expediton also failed, the Dobbs faction, already extremely well organized, forced Parliament to set up a Committee of inquiry to examine the Company's affairs. The inquiry became of nation-wide interest. Twenty-eight petitions reached Parliament demanding the end of the monopoly. Full-length accounts of the Moor expedition by Ellis and Drage were published along with many pamphlets and much adverse press commentary. The quiet reply

of the Company's solicitor, Joshua Sharpe, with its factual prosaic reports, saved the day for the Company. For the first time, the structure of the Company was laid bare. The value of imports and exports, the position of the posts, the instructions to the factors, even the standard of trade with the Indians - all were revealed. However the Company had the satisfaction of seeing Dobbs' extravagant claims against them disproved. Instead of a 2000 per cent profit, as Dobbs claimed, they could show that the profit had only exceeded ten per cent, in over thirty years. Parliament, satisfied in regard to the Company's integrity, had next to be convinced that it was efficiently upholding British interests against the French. Some of Dobbs' worst doubts were half justified in this regard, but the public was satisfied and the case was dropped.

One of the main accusations of the Dobbs faction had been that the Company had failed to explore the interior. The Company had tried to produce evidence to defend itself. The strongest argument was that Henry Kelsey had done considerable exploring on behalf of the Company. Kelsey, apprenticed to the Company at a very young age, had become friendly with the Indians, had mastered the Cree language, and with his Indian friends had been the first white man to enter what is now Saskatchewan, between the years of 1690-92. When his journals were produced as evidence at the Parliamentary hearing, they appeared to be either incomplete or contradictory or both. For this reason his journals were discredited. It is interesting to know that in 1926 the missing parts showed up in the Arthur Dobbs Collection of manuscripts which was presented to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. It makes one wonder about Arthur Dobbs' motives and his possible unscrupulousness.

The Dobbs furore averted, the Hudson's Bay Company turned gloomily back to regard the French menace on the prairies. It is perhaps fortunate that they chose to overlook the revelations of Henday and did nothing toward actively opposing the French in the west. The Seven Years War intervened and the defeat of 1759 effectively ended the French regime in Quebec, and with it the fur trade. Soon the western forts were deserted. It looked for a time as though the huge tract of land stretching to the Rockies would be in Company hands. This was not to be. The greatest challenge ever presented to them was now arising. The French fur trade interests were handed on to the British traders from Montreal, scathingly referred to by the old Company as "The Pedlars from Quebec."

ENTER THE NORTH WEST COMPANY

Who were these intruders who so shook the complacency of the Hudson's Bay Company, and changed the course of Canada's history forever? Dr. W.S. Wallace described them vividly in his Documents relating to the North West Company, published in 1934 by the Champlain Society:

> Some of them were French-Canadian traders and voyageurs, the sons of those who had followed La Vérendrye to the rivers and prairies of the West in the dying days of the French régime. Others were American frontiersmen who had served their apprenticeship in the fur-trade in the valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi. Most of them were Scottish High-

> landers, the sons of those who had come to Canada in Wolfe's army or as United Empire Loyalists in the American Revolution. The number of them who were connected with that gallant regiment, the 78th or Fraser's Highlanders, is remarkable; and it is no less remarkable that the numerous Frasers, McTavishes, and McGillivrays, who played such an important part in the history of the North West Company, nearly all came from Lord Lovat's estates. The names of the North West Company partners sound like a roll-call of the clans at Culloden. These men were hardy, courageous, shrewd, and proud. They spent a good part of their lives travelling incredible distances in birch-bark canoes, shooting rapids, or navigating inland seas. They were wrecked and drowned. They suffered hunger and starvation. They were robbed and murdered by the Indians, and sometimes by one another. They fell the victims of smallpox, syphilis, and rum. Yet they conquered half a continent, and they built up a commercial empire, the like of which North America at least has never seen.

The serious competition from the Canadian traders meant that the Hudson's Bay Company had to change its tactics. Its habit had been to wait more or less passively for the Indians to come to the Company's forts with their furs, where trade was carried on with considerable ceremony. The Indians' insistence upon protocol has already been remarked, and their love of maintaining traditions was respected by the Hudson's Bay traders. That this conservatism applied to prices as well as to ceremony has caused much head shaking among the critics of the fur trade. However it is well to remember that it was the Indians with their prejudice against change, who insisted upon both the ritual and the terms. As late as 1884 Isaac Cowie, a Hudson's Bay Company employee, wrote: "Of course everyone knew the prices of each kind of goods which never varied in trade."

Now, with the coming of the Pedlars, the Hudson's Bay Company had to move with the times. More aggressive than the French, although following in their footsteps, the bold Nor'Westers were pushing far to the West, using Michilimackinac and Grand Portage at the west end of Lake Superior as mere stopping off points on their way to the Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan River country. They built forts wherever they went, preferably near the Indian villages, thus saving the Indians the long and arduous trip to the Bay. In 1774 the Hudson's Bay Company built Cumberland House just west of The Pas, the first of many inland posts built in bitter opposition to the Nor'Westers. The man chosen for this task was Samuel Hearne, one of Canada's great explorers.

The Hudson's Bay Company, in its first eighty years, had only had two notable explorers, Kelsey in 1690-92, and Anthony Henday in 1754. Henday was a true adventurer, a hardy adaptable man whose valuable reports, like those of Kelsey, were not taken seriously. With the coming of the Nor'Westers, however, spying expeditions were encouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company. Men such as William Pink, William Tomison, Matthew Cocking and Philip Turnor made bold trips into the interior and brought back written reports. With Samuel Hearne, however, came the first brilliant travel book of the North

West. In his Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean, he stands out as a great geographer, as well as a brave and humane man. He had to learn to travel with the Indians in order to survive on his three great trips which eventually took him to the mouth of the Coppermine River. He was placed in charge of Fort Prince of Wales in 1776, lost the fort to the French but was released by his captor on condition that he complete his narrative, surely a superlative compliment from an enemy officer.

After the turn of the century the Hudson's Bay men moved reluctantly further westward up the Saskatchewan Valley, following their rivals into the Athabasca country and the Arctic watershed. With inland expansion, the proprietors instead of issuing orders from London had to yield new authority to the men in the interior. Eventually the Bay posts became less trading posts and more warehousing depots for incoming goods and outgoing furs.

Unlike the Hudson's Bay Company, the North West Company never had a formal charter. Its shareholders were groups of individuals or companies who were merely linked together because of common commercial interests. The fact that each member was a share-holder or "partner" gave them great incentive to be aggressive, and accounted largely for their phenomenal success until the very last years of their existence. It also caused their downfall, before the corporate solidity of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. The North West Company came into existence, after several false starts, in 1783. At least twice after this date the fragmenting of the Company, usually caused by the dictatorship of the MacTavish-McGillivray connection, brought severe disorder and bloodshed among its members. After MacTavish's death in 1804, there was little dissension, and their empire spread rapidly.

One of the main opponents to MacTavish had been a young Scot, Alexander MacKenzie, who joined the post at Fort Chipewyan in 1787. Two years later, inspired by reading Captain Cook's exploration, he set off with three canoes to explore the river flowing north from Lake Athabasca. Hoping that it might be the river which Cook had described as flowing into Cook's Inlet, he followed the river which now bears his name to the Arctic Ocean. In 1793 he again attempted to reach the Pacific, this time by following the Peace River. This carefully planned expedition, completed by land "with inexpressible toil" took MacKenzie across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific at the Bella Coola Inlet. Another of the world's great travel books resulted, MacKenzie's Voyages from Montreal ... through the Continent of North America to the frozen and Pacific Oceans (London, T. Cadell, 1791).

The world received MacKenzie's achievement with acclaim, and the North West Company seems to have realized the value of accurate map-making. David Thompson, who has been described as "the greatest land geographer the British race ever produced" had served his apprenticeship with the Hudson's Bay Company, but, tired of that company's old-fashioned and deliberate ways, he joined the North West Company in 1797. From then on he was to travel from the Great Lakes and the headwaters of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Columbia, surveying and mapping. His great map of the Canadian North West upon which the seventy-eight posts of the Nor'Westers were marked has survived to become the basis of all subsequent maps of the west. In 1807 while still engrossed in map-making,

Thompson was sent to push the North West Company's trade beyond the Rockies. He discovered the Columbia River, building Kootenay House upon it; and four years later he traced the Columbia to the sea. Although Jacob Astor's Company had already built Fort Astoria at the mouth of the river, the North West Company was able to acquire it in 1813. Their swashbuckling empire now literally stretched from ocean to ocean.

The travels of a relatively unknown Nor'Wester, Alexander Henry the Younger, overlapped many of Thompson's journeys. Easily confused with his uncle of the same name, who had been an early and influential Nor'Wester, the younger man led a similar roving life mainly devoted to commerce at the expense of the Indians. His Manuscript journals ... Exploration and adventure among the Indians on the Red, Saskatchewan, Missouri and Columbia Rivers, 1799 to 1814, were not published until Elliott Coues edited them in 1897. Henry was not a geographer or scientist like his contemporary Thompson; nor did he share the latter's love of nature or of humanity. He despised the Indians among whom he travelled, but his accounts may for that reason be the most dispassionate and accurate which we have. Of particular interest to this exhibition is the account which he gives of a canoeing accident on August 9, 1800, on the Winnipeg River, Manitoba. With his usual laconic accuracy, he names all the goods lost and how many were recovered. In 1966 Dr. Walter Kenyon of the Royal Ontario Museum, recovered many objects which were lost below the falls, a fascinating record of both the life style of the traders, and of their trading objects.

The North West Company in the relatively short period between 1783 and 1810 had made itself a force in the west as great as the once all-powerful Hudson's Bay Company. How long the rivalry might have continued, spreading to the west and north, mile by mile, post by post, is difficult to guess. The Nor'Westers' ruthless tactics seemed to be gaining ground. They acquired great quantities of furs but in doing so showed no concern for protecting the fur-bearing animals, especially breeding females and young. They even obtained Hudson's Bay items in some cases to convince the Indians of the quality of their wares, as can be seen in manuscript inventories of their goods. (The demand for Hudson's Bay blankets and "strouds" however may have been a part of the Indians' well known conservatism - these were the items they were accustomed to, and they wanted identical quality). Alcohol played a large part in winning the Indians' trade. Eventually the very ruthlessness of the Nor'Westers was to cause their undoing, and in a sudden and unexpected manner.

LORD SELKIRK AND THE RED RIVER COLONY

Lord Selkirk, a wealthy and philanthropic Scot, in his efforts to alleviate the lot of the crofters in Scotland who were being put off their land, had already made two efforts at colonization in Canada. One, in Prince Edward Island, was a marked success; the other, at Baldoon, Ont., had failed. His great dream was to found a colony at Red River in the present province of Manitoba. This seemingly innocent plan was to destroy both Selkirk and the North West Company.

He first acquired financial control of the Hudson's Bay Company which

had held the land since the charter of 1670, obtaining 45,000,000 acres in 1811 for his settlers. Two parties of settlers established themselves in 1811 and 1812 near the present site of Winnipeg. Unfortunately for all, the settlement lay athwart the North West Company's lines of commerce, and trouble was soon brewing. Another cause, naturally, was that the Nor'Westers were convinced that the Hudson's Bay Company had had no legal right to sell the land on which both companies held trading forts with their accompanying small communities. They deliberately incited the Indians and Métis against the colony. The conflict became serious with the massacre at Seven Oaks in 1816, and ended with the capture of Fort William by Selkirk in 1817. However because of the power of individual Nor'Westers in Canada, Selkirk lost the legal struggle which ensued. His health shattered, he retired to France where he died in 1820. The Nor'Westers had been so absorbed in the legal case, fighting Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company, that they had neglected both fur-trading and bookkeeping for several years. Here the weakness of their overall organization was revealed. Financial disaster overtook them, and in 1821 they had to agree to union with the Hudson's Bay Company. The partners and share-holders of the North West Company were given shares in the Hudson's Bay Company; but in actual fact it was the end of the Nor'Westers. In the words of Washington Irving, who had dined at "Beaver Hall" in Montreal and had been astonished at the grand life style of the partners: "The feudal state of Fort William is at an end ... The lords of the lakes and forests are all passed away."

THE END OF THE HUDSON'S BAY EMPIRE

The union of two companies meant that the monopoly of the fur trade was re-established from Labrador to Oregon and from Red River to the Yukon. There a boundary was drawn between the territories of the Russian-American Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. Under the monopoly certain changes were effected. The use of liquor was restricted, the lot of the Indian improved and more care given to protecting the fur-bearing animals. However the monopoly could not last forever, with new settlers arriving and individual trappers and traders wanting to act independently. In 1846 the Oregon territory was lost to the U.S.A. Free trade in furs had to be conceded in the Red River Settlement in 1849. In 1857 came rumblings of the eventual end of the monopoly, when a select committee of the British House of Commons recommended the opening of areas suitable to settlement.

Once Confederation had been achieved in 1867, Rupert's Land was the next area to be seriously considered for annexation to the New Dominion of Canada. It was already apparent that the rule of the Hudson's Bay Company would no longer satisfy the growing population of the west. Not only had the old colony at Red River grown, but there was a significant movement of American settlers from the south into the area. The easiest solution to both these problems seemed to be the transfer of the huge area known as Rupert's Land to the new Dominion. Finally in 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company surrendered its rights under the charter to the British government, which in turn transferred Rupert's Land to Canada. Canada had to pay the Company £300,000, as well as land amounting to one twentieth of the fertile land of the prairies and land around the existing trading posts. The apparent ease with which this tremendous coup was carried out was only on the

surface. The Canadian government had neglected to prepare the existing population for the change. Former Hudson's Bay employees, old Red River colonists, and most importantly the Métis, felt that they would lose their lands as well as their rights to self-government. An uprising under Louis Riel took place before the title to the west had actually been taken over by Canada. It was not until 1870 that Manitoba could be annexed, thus becoming Canada's fifth province.

The remainder of the Hudson's Bay Company's vast holdings became known as the Northwest Territories and the old name of Rupert's Land was dropped. Thus passed away an enormous private empire - one of the largest the world has ever seen.

It is well to remember that when the Hudson's Bay Company sold its territorial rights to the new Dominion of Canada, it retained its 120 trading posts, with some of the adjoining land. The fur traders (Nor'Westers as well as Hudson's Bay Company employees) had been Britain's sole representatives on the prairies and, in the nineteenth century, on the Pacific slopes as well. These people remained after the actual Deed of Surrender. The fur trade continued and prospered. The journals and account books of the traders in distant posts show the same concern with the trade as before; and the stores of the company have continued into the present day.

Although the new Bay stores deal in more workaday wares - the necessities of modern living - the Hudson's Bay Company has survived as the oldest of those great corporations founded in Britain's imperial past which have been able to adapt to the modern world.

NOTE ON HUDSON'S BAY CURRENCY

It became apparent in the earliest days of the Hudson's Bay Company that some form of money was necessary to do business with the Indians. The currency would have to be something simple and comprehensible to the Indians, similar to the wampum which they already used. Originally the Company used discs made of ivory, shell or bone. Another popular early item was a wooden stick properly inscribed. The value was almost always "One Made Beaver" - that is, one prime winter beaver skin. Early in the 17th century, the beaver had been adopted as the unit of value, and it continued to be for over two centuries. When desperate for tokens, the Hudson's Bay Company factor would manufacture his own coinage from pieces of copper or brass barrel hoops, which he would cut into pieces and stamp "H B C". The Indians had such trust in the Company and its servants that the system was quite acceptable to them.

After the establishment of the Red River settlement, some form of currency was needed for use among the newcomers. The Company's first promissory notes, 2000 for one pound each and 4000 for five shillings each, were sent to York Factory in May, 1820. The notes came in books each containing 100 notes. They were not immediately

placed in circulation chiefly because of Governor Simpson's fear that the settlers might hoard them. However after 1824 they were gradually put into circulation, and other denominations were added. They served very well until the surrender of the Company's lands to the new Dominion of Canada in 1870. Interestingly a hoard of unused notes from the original shipment was found at York Factory in 1920, and the two books of notes at the University of Toronto Library, presented by J.B. Tyrrell, almost certainly came from that lot.

Decimal currency became official in the Province of Canada in 1858, but this did not apply to the west. Most merchants continued to use tokens, each inscribed with his own company's insignia, as coinage was not always available. Between 1860 and 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company in the Eastern Main District began to issue round brass tokens in the denominations of one, one-half, one-quarter and one-eight Made Beavers. It is interesting that, owing to a die-cutters error, the letters MB were inscribed as N B. This is probably the best known of the Company's coinage.

Other currency, both paper and metal, were used in other parts of the Company's territory, but no complete collection exists. An aluminum set of tokens was used as late as 1946 to familiarize the Eskimo with the decimal system of coinage.

Rachel Grover

Thanks are due to the Royal Ontario Museum and particularly to Dr. Walter Kenyon for the loan of many of the trading artifacts displayed. The assistance of Janet Holmes of the Canadiana Gallery and of Peta Daniels of the Department of New World Archeology is also gratefully acknowledged.

The coat of arms used on the front cover is taken from H.T. Martin, Castorologia (Montreal, W. Drysdale, 1892). The design on the back cover is the coat of arms adopted by the Hudson's Bay Company.

A list of selected items displayed

The French and the Fur Trade

Champlain, Samuel de. Voyages et descovvertvres faites en la Nouvelle France ... 2. ed. Paris, Collet, 1627.

Le Jeune, Paul. Relation de ce qui s'est passé en la Novvelle France en l'année 1636 ... Paris, Cramoisy, 1637.

Relation de ce qui s'est passé ... en l'année 1638. Paris, Cramoisy, 1638.

Hennepin, Louis. A new discovery of a vast country in America ... to which is added new discoveries in North America, not published in the French edition. London, Bentley, 1698.

Lahontan, Louis Armand de Lom D'Arce, baron de. Nouveaux voyages ... dans l'Amerique Septentrionale. La Haye, chez les Frères l'Honoré, 1703.

Charlevoix, Pierre François Xavier de. Histoire et description de la Nouvelle France avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amerique Septentrionale. Paris, chez la Veuve Ganeau, 1744.

Champlain Society publications:
Le Clercq, Lafitau, Sagard, Lescarbot, Champlain.

The Hudson's Bay Company

Oldmixon, John. The British Empire in America ... London, J. Nicholson, 1708.

Printed material relating to the Arthur Dobbs controversy:

Dobbs, Arthur. An account of the countries adjoining to Hudson's Bay ... London, J. Robinson, 1744.

Middleton, Christopher. A vindication of the conduct of Captain Christopher Middleton in a late voyage ... London, The Author, 1743.

Drage, Theodorus Swaine. An account of a voyage for the discovery of the a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights ... by the Clerk of California. London, Jolliffe, 1748.

Ellis, Henry. A voyage to Hudson's Bay by the Dobbs Galley and California ... London, H. Whitridge, 1748.

Robson, Joseph. An account of six years residence in Hudson's Bay ... London, J. Payne, 1752.

Manuscript material from the files of Joshua Sharpe, solicitor of the Hudson's Bay Company, relating to the Parliamentary inquiry into the Company's affairs after the Dobbs controversy; also material relating to the petition of the Hatters of Manchester and Chester.

Hearne, Samuel. A journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean ... Dublin, P. Payne, 1796.

The Hudson's Bay Company

Hearne, Samuel. Voyage de Samuel Hearne, du Fort du Prince de Galles dans la Baie du Hudson, à l'Océan nord. [Paris, 1798-99]

Hudson's Bay Company. A wooden tally used in trading with the Indians. Presumably worth one made beaver. Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Canadiana Gallery.

Umfreville, Edward. The present state of Hudson's Bay, containing a full description of that settlement and ... of the fur trade. London, C. Stalker, 1790.

Hudson's Bay Company. Promissory notes sent from London for use at York Factory.

The North West Company

Mackenzie, Sir Alexander. Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence through the continent of North America to the frozen and Pacific Oceans. London, Cadell, 1801. Author's presentation copy to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Thompson, David. [Narrative of his exploration in Western America, 1784-1812. 18--] Original manuscript.

Thompson, David. The Rocky Mountains south of the Saleesh Lake. Original sketch.

North West Company. A voyageur's license. 1811.
Indian ledgers, 1800. Original manuscript.
Inventory of sundry goods. Provisions and liquors. Temiscamingue, 1805. Original manuscript.
Bills of lading, 1817. Original manuscript.

Lord Selkirk and the Red River Colony

Indenture of a sale of lands by the Indian chiefs to the Earl of Selkirk, 1817. Original manuscript.

Selkirk, Thomas Douglas, 5th earl of. A sketch of the British fur trade in North America with observations relative to the North-West Company of Montreal. London, Ridgway, 1816.

[Wilcocke, Samuel Hull] Notice respecting the boundary between His Majesty's possessions in North America, and the United States ... London, McMillan, 1817.

The End of the Hudson's Bay Empire

Hudson's Bay Company. Journal of occurrences ... 1884-86. Original manuscript.
Indians' account books. 1900. Original manuscript.

Financial Reform Association, Liverpool. The Hudson's Bay Company versus Magna Charta and the British people. Liverpool [1857]

Hudson's Bay Company. Manitoba en the North-West ... facts and information for settlers. London, Causton, 1881.
Hudson's Bay tokens issued between 1860 and 1870. On loan from the Royal Ontario Museum, Canadiana Gallery.

PRO
PELLE
CUTEM